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ITALY'S EXPERIENCE WITH COLONIES.

The Italians have had no time to work out a system of colonial administration. Italian expansion is a phenomenon of the last fifteen years, and its decisive and disastrous conclusion a happening of yesterday. It presents nothing more to the student of administration than a series of tentatives whose action, whether for good or ill, has been repeatedly impeded and crossed by the shocks of war. There has been no chance to evolve a consistent, characteristic line of policy. No judgment passed upon such an incipient system can be final; it cannot hope to attain the accuracy of one pronounced upon a system that has been for decades or centuries in the process of development and correction, under conditions of peace or, at least, of periodic peace.¹ The study of beginnings is not, however, without its instructive side, nor is the Italian colonial policy without its distinctive results.

The first foreign possession of United Italy was the bay of Assab, on the Red Sea, purchased through the agency of the Rubattino Steamship Company (Nov. 15, 1869); the object of the purchase was to acquire a station on the new route to the Indies and also to develop the commerce of Arabia and the interior of Africa. The Italian government finally paid two-thirds of a million lire for this sterile tract, to which it gave no more attention until the period of colonial fever set in.

¹ The following sketch will be found defective in matter of detail; it has been impossible to secure in time the data necessary for an exhaustive treatment of taxation, etc. The writer has been forced to deal merely with the generalities of the case, supporting himself with such figures as are available.

This phase was suddenly initiated by the Italian occupation of Massowah (Feb. 5, 1885). Considerations of national vanity, race-pride and "megalomania", brought to the fore in consequence of this unopposed movement, spurred the nation to an activity which by 1891 had augmented the Italian possessions and protectorates to the following number :

POSSESSIONS.¹

	Square miles.	Population
Country around Massowah, with Keren and Asmara.....	3,100	250,000
Dahlak Archipelago.....	420	2,000
Assab Territory.....	550	6,800

PROTECTORATES.

Territory of Habab, Bogos, Beni-Amer, etc.	18,000	200,000
Territory of Afâr or Danakil, including the Sultanate of Aussa.....	34,000	200,000
Somali Coast (Obbia, etc.), with a tract of interior country extending to Wadi Nogal and Mudug.....	90,000	300,000
Kingdom of Abyssinia (Tigré, Lasta, Amhara, Gojam, Shoa, Kaffa, Harrar, etc.).....	190,000	5,000,000
	<hr/> 336,070	<hr/> 5,958,800

Subsequently, the Sultan of Zanzibar ceded to Italy all his powers over the four ports of Brava, Merca, Magadishu and Uarsheic for thirty years, for the sum of 100,000 rupies (about \$47,000) per year (Aug. 12, 1892); and the English gave over the administration of Benadir for three years (from July 16, 1893) to the commercial establishment of V. Filonardi and Company. In the course of later hostilities, the Italians came into possession of extended territories watered by the Juba, Uebi, Shebeli, etc. Cassala was occupied in 1894, together with Coatit and Senafé; in 1895, Tigré was annexed. Some of the above protectorates, therefore, had by 1896 come to be regarded as possessions.

¹ From Prof. Guido Cora, "Statesman's Yearbook," 1891.

In consequence of the disasters of 1896, the protectorate over Abyssinia no longer exists, districts taken from the Abyssinians have been restored, and Cassala has been handed over to England. Little interest is displayed in Eritrea; the colony is now regarded as a necessary burden.

In the administration of her possessions, Italy set out with the purpose of avoiding all the errors which the historians of colonization point out in the various national systems. And it must be said that the form of administration devised, especially that due to the spirit and initiative of Gen. Baratieri, was liberal and progressive. But, as a matter of fact, all these good intentions were little better than wasted on Eritrea; they were worthy of a better field of application, where ill success would have been less certain. Without entering into detail, it may be said that Eritrea, with the possible exception of some limited and distant parts, was utterly unfit for agricultural or plantation colonization, and that as a commercial station, the colony could arouse no well-grounded enthusiasm. No amount of encouragement sufficed to allure to Eritrea an emigration of either men or capital. Indeed Italy was in no position to invest capital outside her own boundaries, while her labor was the kind whose emigration is rather a flight than a display of personal initiative. She was in no way ready to undertake colonization.

The general trend of events could easily be prophesied from such conditions. The Italian government, far from profiting by Eritrea, has for the most part, been intent upon reducing the colonial deficit to nine million lire per annum, and has succeeded none too well in the endeavor. It is estimated by Brunialti that her "colo-

nies" had cost Italy about 500,000,000 lire and 10,000 men up to 1897.

During the early nineties the colony was gradually advanced to an autonomous administration, and to the management of its own finances. The imperial government is represented by the governor and three counselors. Under the administration of Baratieri, who was appointed governor in 1892, the colony was divided into the district of Massowah, where the administration, judicial, social and political, was carried on as in Italy, and into dependent territories, where native laws and uses were respected and applied as far as possible. The native dues, etc., were of a distinctly feudal type.

Up to Jan. 1, 1890, there was no special account for the colonies; at that time a colonial budget was instituted, being appended to that of the department of Foreign Affairs. In 1892, certain powers, exercised by the Italian minister of marine in the colony, were discontinued, and the corresponding accounts transferred to the colonial budget. Gradually there were added to this colonial balance other items formerly entered under the heads of finance, treasury, posts and telegraphs, and public works. An expense of about eight millions was thus recognized as necessary for all these services for which provision has at first been made fragmentarily, and which were now brought directly under the eye and responsibility of the Governor.

In spite of Baratieri's wise regulations, the colony could pay only a small annual sum toward its own maintenance, the deficit being advanced by Italy. The following tables¹ will give some idea (in thousands of lire) of the colonial receipts and expenses:

¹These tables are constructed from figures given in the "Statesman's Yearbook" and the "Almanach de Gotha"; they serve, of course, merely to illustrate the general character of the budget.

	Receipts from col. [ooo omitted.]	Expenses.	Deficit.
1890-1	1,520	3,167	1,647
1891-2	1,326	2,376	1,050
1894-5	1,448	2,234	786
1895-6	1,700	2,349	649
1897-8	1,900	-----	-----
1898-9	2,492	2,864	373

These figures do not, however, indicate the real drain on the Italian treasury during the period; costs connected with the maintenance of colonial troops, with military operations, etc., raise the figure perceptibly.

Total cost to Italy (in thousands of lire):¹

From seven to eleven million lire are spent yearly in merely maintaining the colonial army. In the discussions over the colony and the colonial policy, the burden on the treasury has been generally estimated at twenty millions, and the most sanguine have not hoped to reduce it below seven or nine millions, in times of comparative peace. For a miserably overtaxed and debt-burdened country that pays about one-third of its money as interest on debt and spends another third on its army and navy, such a colony is something of a luxury.

The Italians expected remarkable services from Eritrea in the direction of amelioration of conditions of emigration, of the building up of the merchant marine and of the development of commerce. Little service has been rendered, however, in any of these particulars. For a time it was hoped that the colony could be made to pay

¹ Including expenses of military occupation, posts and telegraphs, railroads, etc.

1891-2	15,898
1894-5	13,728
1895-6	123,738
1896-7	48,970
1897-8	19,800

its own expenses, but at present that idea also seems to have been abandoned. Certain considerations of national pride prevent a withdrawal from Africa, or a severe limitation of present boundaries.

The distinctive feature of Italian colonization has been the artificiality of its development. Conditions favorable to a natural development were absent both in Italy and in Eritrea; and, although details of management, etc., may have been wisely ordered, it is clear enough that Italian colonization has been practically a complete loss and failure. Other states think, perhaps, that they can afford to pay for the privilege of civilizing savages, developing through colonial possessions their trade and marine, and entering the circle of the colony-holding "Great Powers"; but the example of Italy should warn small and poor states from an undue expansion, and should cause the wealthiest nations to consider well the character of proposed possessions before embarking upon a policy which implies a reversal of the natural order of development, and whose hoped-for advantages have, in Italy's case, been shown so entirely illusory.

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